



# Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges

Service Employee International Union (SEIU) Local 1973 – “Stronger Together!”

## STATEWIDE OFFICERS

**Bryan R. Bonina**  
President

**Lorraine Li**  
Vice President • Faculty

**Maureen Chalmers**  
Vice President • CCPs

**Robyn Brooks**  
**Ramon Esponda**  
Vice Presidents • Part-timers

**Jonathan Morris**  
Membership

**William Foster**  
Diversity

**Steve Krevisky**  
Secretary

**Tony Scott**  
Treasurer

**Steve Cohen**  
Presidential Aide

**Tom Jackson**  
Grievance

## 4Cs STAFF

**David Bosco**  
**Bob Reutenauer**  
**Gregory Jackson**  
Internal Organizers

**Ellen Benson**  
Communications Director

**Kimberly Small**  
Office Manager

**Roberto Fernandez**  
Political Organizer

February 15, 2017

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Bryan Bonina and I am the President of the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges (The 4Cs) SEIU Local 1973. The 4Cs represents full and part-time faculty and professional staff, including Librarians, Counselors, and Admissions Directors at Connecticut's 12 community colleges. We also represent adjunct faculty at the University of Hartford. I am here to testify on the Governor's budget recommendations for the Community Colleges.

I recognize the difficult challenge you face this session. Having to close a significant budget gap while still protecting our most vulnerable populations will not be easy. However, I am asking you to not only continue to invest in the Community Colleges and our students but to increase that investment.

The budget proposal released last week represents a significant loss to the Community Colleges funding. While we recognize that almost all state agencies received cuts, higher education has been severely impacted by budget reductions over the last few years. While many states are starting to increase their spending on higher education again, only four states have reported decreasing funding in percentages greater than Connecticut for FY16-17: Alaska, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Wyoming (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/06/states-report-34-percent-increase-higher-education-appropriations>). We should be ashamed of this fact and should change it in the next biennium budget.

At the Connecticut community colleges, the decrease in state funding has not only lead to increased tuition but also to larger class sizes, less faculty-to-student advisement time, less library resources, and the over reliance on part-time faculty (who have little to no job security); all of these cuts are affecting the ability of the professionals we represent to deliver on the promise of providing an affordable, quality college education. In short, our students are paying more and receiving less.

A first-rate, affordable and accessible education for all of Connecticut's residents is essential to ensure that the State of Connecticut and all its citizens receive the economic and social benefits a quality higher education provides. Individuals with college degrees earn higher incomes, which translates into more revenue for the state. Further, a strong system of higher education makes the state more attractive to businesses. From large corporations to small start-ups, businesses are looking for a well-educated labor pool from which to draw.



Members of the 4Cs believe higher education should be a basic right for those who aspire to pursue their goals of self-realization, and we must ensure that it does not become a privilege for only those with private resources. Again, I am well aware of the great challenges you face in the coming months, and the difficult responsibilities that you have. I understand that everyone who comes before you will be making a strong case as to why their needs are as critical as ours. However, I urge you to recognize the benefits that public higher education provides to our state. An increase in public higher education is the right thing to do for the future of our citizens and the great state of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bryan R. Bonina, President  
Congress of CT Community Colleges